

## A SLOW FLIGHT!

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Compared with the current time interval of forty-five minutes between Brisbane and Rockhampton by jets the following story of my unusual flight from Rockhampton to Brisbane - and return - compares vividly with present day flying conditions.

I made the flight in a De Haviland 60 (Cirrus Moth) in 1932, despite the fact that I had to contend with strong head winds - so strong that normally one would have been tempted to turn back.

At that time, Captain Harold Fraser of the Rockhampton Aerial Services was operating a weekly service to Mount Coolon, to transport gold and passengers etc. to Rockhampton. The same company also operated a weekly service - each weekend - to Brisbane and return. The D.H.50 was the aircraft used for all of these services.

These were pre-teletype and telex days. The *Rockhampton Morning Bulletin* had a contract with the Rockhampton Aerial Services, to deliver a copy of the *Brisbane Sunday Mail* to them at their Quay Street premises, every Sunday morning.

During the week prior to September 3, 1932 Captain Fraser intimated that although he intended being in Brisbane that weekend, he did not plan to return to Rockhampton on the Sunday, as it was his intention to proceed to Canberra to discuss the subject of a subsidy for the Mount Coolon service. It is interesting to note that that his endeavours were not in vain, because he did succeed in obtaining a subsidy of three pence per mile.

Although Captain Fraser was aware that I had only forty hours solo flying experience, he was also aware of my keenness to add to my flying time, and requested that I make the return flight to Brisbane to collect and bring back to Rockhampton the copy of the *Sunday Mail*. I agreed to do this.

On Saturday the 3rd, using the Rockhampton Aero Club Moth (a plane with an 80 horsepower engine, and capable of a top speed of eighty miles per hour) I set off for Brisbane. Head-winds were experienced almost from the outset, with the result that by the time I was over Gladstone, I was indulging in mental calculations as regards my fuel endurance. This particular machine was fitted with an extra fuel tank, installed in front of the passenger seat. Even so, the content of this tank had to be hand-pumped up to the main overhead tank. This, of course had to be carried out by whoever was piloting the machine - a far cry from present day practices!

Despite the head-winds, I estimated that I had sufficient endurance to carry on, and ultimately arrived at Maryborough after some four hours' flying time, and with only about an inch of oil in the sump!

Once in the air again, conditions eased somewhat for the remainder of the trip. My time-interval from Rockhampton to Archerfield was six hours twenty minutes flying time.

A taxi from Archerfield took me to the city, to the Canberra Hotel. The taxi fare was ten shillings, and the tariff at the hotel was six shillings and six pence for bed and breakfast!

After collecting my "cargo", I took off on the homeward flight to Rockhampton. This time, the flight took a mere four hours, but by this time, my enthusiasm for flying was dampened somewhat.

Surely this must rate as one of the slowest flights on record!

Rockhampton to Brisbane .....	6 hours 20 minutes
Brisbane to Rockhampton .....	4 hours
Total for return trip .....	10 hours 20 minutes

Unlike present day practices when flights between two points are normally carried out in a straight line, in those days, with such machines, it was prudent to fly along the coast, even though it did incur extra mileage, so that in the event of an engine failure, it might be possible to land on a sandy beach.

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ROCKHAMPTON AERIAL SERVICES LTD. operated from ca. 1933. The company was absorbed by Airlines of Australia Ltd. in 1936, to secure the Brisbane to Rockhampton route. The above photo has been copied from the original lent by the Queensland Air Museum. Neg. no. 10279.